SAINT AUGUSTINE

THE TEACHER

THE FREE CHOICE OF THE WILL

GRACE AND FREE WILL

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(De gratia et libero arbitrio)

sins may be forgiven, and the latter, that we may avoid sin, or overcome it. There would be no reason to make these petitions to our Father in heaven if we were able to do these things by human will power. Now I would advise you and strongly urge you to read attentively the work of Saint Cyprian which he composed *On the Lord's Prayer* and, so far as God helps you, to understand and commit it to memory. You will note in this book how he addresses himself to the free will of those whom he is instructing in this treatise so as to make it clear that they are to ask in prayer for help to fulfill all that the Law commands. But this would certainly be meaningless if man's will were sufficient to do so without the help of God.

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27. But we have shown these men to be no defenders of free will, but rather its boastful destroyers. For the grace bestowed upon us through Jesus our Lord is neither the knowledge of God's law nor nature nor the mere remission of sin, but that grace which makes it possible to fulfill the Law so that our nature is set free from the dominion of sin. Since, as I say, the Pelagians have already been proven wrong on these points, they now resort to this device in their endeavor to show that God's grace is given according to our merits. They say this, for example: "Though grace is not given in view of good works, inasmuch as it is by grace that we do good, it is given nevertheless in view of the merits of a good will," since, as they maintain, "the good will of a man at prayer precedes his prayer, this will is, in turn, preceded by the will to believe, so that, consequent upon such merits, there follows the bestowal of grace by God who hears our prayers."

28. I have already discussed above the subject of faith,[1]

1 Cf. 7.16-17.

namely, the will to believe, so as to show that faith pertains to grace. The Apostle, for example, did not say, "I have obtained mercy because I was faithful," but rather, "I have obtained mercy to be faithful."[2] There are also other testimonies, including the passage: "Be wise unto sobriety, according as God has divided to everyone the measure of faith,"[3] and the passage I already quoted: "By grace you have been saved through faith; and that not from yourselves, but it is the gift of God."[4] Besides, there are his words to the Ephesians: "Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."[5] And another passage where he says: "For you have been given the favor on Christ's behalf—not only to believe in him but also to suffer for him."[6] Both of these, therefore, namely, the will to believe and the patience to suffer, pertain to grace since, as he stated, both have been given. And there is the very important passage where he says: "Since we have the same spirit of faith . . ."[7] He does not say "knowledge of faith," but "spirit of faith." He put it this way that we might understand how faith is given even without our asking for it, so that other graces may be granted in answer to the prayer of faith. "How," he asks, "are they to call upon him in whom they have not believed?"[8] Accordingly, it is the spirit of grace that enables us to have faith so that we may, through faith, ask in prayer for the strength to do what is commanded of us. This is why the Apostle constantly puts faith before the Law, seeing that we are incapable of doing what the Law commands unless, through faith, we ask in prayer for the strength to do so.

29. For if faith pertains to the will alone and is not a gift

2 1 Cor. 7.25.
3 Rom. 12.3.
4 Eph. 2.8.
5 Eph. 6.23.
6 Phil. 1.29.
7 2 Cor. 4.15.
8 Rom. 10.14.

of God, then why do we pray that those who refuse to believe should come to believe? It would be absolutely useless for us to do this unless we were entirely correct in our belief that Almighty God can bring about a conversion of the will to believe even in those whose wills are perverse and hostile to the faith. The Psalmist does in fact put his finger on man's free will where he says: "Today if you shall hear His voice, harden not your hearts."[9] But if God were not able to take away even that hardness of heart, He could not declare through his Prophet: "I will take away the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them a heart of flesh."[10] The fact that this prophecy was made with reference to the New Testament is clearly shown by the Apostle where he says: "You are our letter . . . written not with ink but with the spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on fleshy tablets of the heart."[11] We are not to think that this was meant to imply that those who should live spiritual lives might live according to the flesh. What is meant is this: as a stone, with which a hardened heart is compared, is without any feeling, what was left for God but to compare a heart with understanding with flesh and its capacity for feeling? The Prophet Ezechiel expresses it this way: "I will give them another heart and give them a new spirit; and I will take away the stony heart out of their flesh, and I will give them a heart of flesh that they may walk in my commandments and keep my judgments and do them: and that they may be my people, and I may be their God."[12] Would it not be the height of absurdity for us to maintain that there was some antecedent good merit in any man's good will to bring about the removal of his stony heart when, in fact, this stony heart simply signifies a will that is obstinate and absolutely unbending in its opposition to God? For where a good will precedes, there is, to be sure, no longer a heart of stone.

9 Ps. 94.8.
10 Ezech. 11.19.
11 2 Cor. 3.2-3.
12 Ezech. 11.19-20.

30. In another passage, too, God makes it very plain through the same Prophet that it is He who brings about such changes, not by reason of any good merits found in men, but for His own name's sake, where He says: "It is not for your sake that I will do this, O house of Israel, but for my holy name's sake, which you have profaned among the nations whither you went. And I will sanctify my great name which was profaned among the Gentiles, which you have profaned in the midst of them: that the Gentiles may know that I am the Lord, saith the Lord God, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes. For I will take you from among the Gentiles and will gather you together out of all the countries and will bring you into your own land. And I will pour upon you clean water and you shall be cleansed from all your filthiness and I will cleanse you from all your idols. And I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you. And I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit in the midst of you, and I will cause you to walk in my commandments and to keep my judgments, and do them."[13]

Who is so blind as not to see, who so stone-like as not to perceive, that this grace is not given according to the merit of a good will, when the Lord so testifies where He says: "I will do this, O house of Israel, for my holy name's sake"? Why, in fact, did He say, "I will do this, but for my holy name's sake," if not to keep them from supposing that this was done in view of their good merits, as the Pelagians are not unashamed to maintain? The Lord makes it clear that they not only had no previous good merits but even had evil merits when He says: ". . . but for my holy name's sake which you have profaned among the Gentiles." How can anyone fail to see that the profanation of the Lord's name is a dreadful evil? But yet "for my name's sake," He says, "which you have profaned," I will make you good, but not for your own sake

13 Ezech. 36.22-27.

"And I will sanctify my great name," He says, "which was profaned among the Gentiles, which you have profaned in the midst of them." He says He is going to sanctify His name which He had said before was holy. Now this is the very thing we pray for in the Lord's prayer when we say: "Hallowed be thy name," namely, that His name, which of itself is certainly ever holy, may be sanctified among men. There then follow the words: "That the Gentiles may know that I am the Lord, says the Lord God, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes." Accordingly, though He is Himself forever holy, yet is He sanctified among those on whom He bestows His grace when He removes from them the stony heart with which they had profaned the name of the Lord.

Chapter 15

31. But lest anyone should suppose that men do nothing themselves in this matter by their free will, it is accordingly said in the Psalm: "Harden not your hearts";[1] and in Ezechiel himself: "Cast away from you all your transgressions which you have wickedly committed against me and make to yourselves a new heart and a new spirit, and keep all my commandments. And why will you die, O house of Israel? For I desire not the death of him who dies, says the Lord God; be converted and live."[2] We should keep in mind that the God who tells us, "Be converted and live," is He to whom we pray, "Convert us, O God."[3] We should keep in mind that He says: "Cast away from you all your transgressions," even though it is He Himself "who justifies the impious."[4] We should keep in mind that He who says, "Make to yourselves a new heart and a new spirit," is the very one who declares: "I will give you

1 Ps. 94.8.
2 Ezech. 18.31-32.
3 Ps. 79.4; 84.5-7.
4 Rom. 4.5.

a new heart and put a new spirit within you."[5] How then can He say, "Make to yourselves," when He says, "I will give you"? Why does God command something of us if He is going to give it Himself? Why does He give, if it is man who must act? Only because He gives what He commands, whenever He helps man to do what He commands.[6] Free will is always present in us, but it is not always good. For it is either free of justice, while serving sin, and then it is evil; or it is free of sin, while serving justice, and then it is good. But the grace of God is always good and brings about a good will in a man who before was possessed of an evil will. It is by this grace, too, that this same good will, once it begins to exist, is expanded and made so strong that it is able to fulfill whatever of God's commandments it wishes, whenever it does so with a strong and perfect will. This is the force of those words of the Scripture: "If thou wilt keep my commandments . . . ."[7] So let the man who has the will, but not the power, realize that he does not yet have a perfect will, and let him pray for a will strong enough to fulfill the commandments. This is certainly the way a man receives help to do as he is commanded. The will is of use only when we have the power, while the power is of use only when we have the will. What good is it to us if we will what we cannot do, or are unwilling to do what we are able to do?

Chapter 16

32. The Pelagians imagine they know something important when they assert "God would not command something that He knew man was unable to do." How could anyone be

5 Ezech. 36.26.

6 The same thought is expressed in the famous formula of the *Confessions: Da quod iubes et iube quod vis* (10.29.40; 10.37.60). In the *De dono perseverantiae* (20.53), composed in 429, Augustine reports how the Pelagian controversy was occasioned by Pelagius' reading of these passages.

7 Ecclus. [Sirach] 15.16.

ignorant of that? But God does give commands beyond our power precisely in order that we may know what it is we ought to ask of Him. For it is faith itself which accomplishes through prayer that which the Law commands. Now He who said: "If thou wilt, thou shalt keep the commandments," goes on to say a little later in the same Book of Ecclesiasticus: "Who shall set a guard before my mouth and a seal of wisdom upon my lips, that I fall not by them and that my tongue destroy me not?"[1] To be sure, he had already received these commands: "Keep thy tongue from evil and thy lips from speaking guile."[2] Inasmuch, then, as he spoke the truth in saying: "If thou wilt, thou shalt keep the commandments," why does he ask that a guard be set before his mouth as the Psalmist does where he asks: "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth"?[3] Why are God's commandments and his own free will not enough for him when in fact he will keep the commandments if he so wills? How many are the commandments of God directed against pride! He is familiar with them already, and he will keep them if he will have the will to do so. Why, then, does he say a little later: "O Lord, Father and God of my life . . . give me not haughtiness of my eyes."[4] Already the Law had commanded him: "Thow shalt not covet."[5] Let him therefore only do what is commanded since, if he so wills, he will keep the commandments. Why then does he go on to say: "Turn away from me all coveting"?[6] How many are the commandments of God directed against impurity! Let him only observe them because he will keep them if he so wills. Why is it then that he crys out to God: "Let not the greediness of the belly and the lusts of the flesh take hold of me"?[7] Were we to address these questions to him in person, he

1 22.23.
2 Ps. 33.14.
3 Ps. 140.3.
4 Ecclus. [Sirach] 23.4-5.
5 Exod. 20.17.
6 Ecclus. [Sirach] 23.5.
7 Ecclus. [Sirach] 33.6.

would reply altogether correctly and say: "From that prayer of mine wherein I beg these favors of God, you may see what was meant when I said, 'If thou wilt, thou shalt keep the commandments.' " Certainly, we do keep the commandments if only we have the will to do so. But inasmuch as "the will is prepared by the Lord,"[8] we must ask of Him that strength of will which is sufficient to bring our will to act. Certainly, in willing anything, it is we who will, but it is He who enables us to will what is good. And the words I quoted a short while ago refer to Him, namely: "The will is prepared by the Lord." It is further said of Him: "The steps of a man are directed by the Lord and He it is who wills his way";[9] and, "It is God who works in you even to will."[10]

In doing anything, it is certainly we who act, but it is God's act that enables us to act by His bestowal of efficacious power upon our will, as He says Himself: "And I will cause you to walk in my commandments and to keep my judgments, and to do them."[11] In saying, "I will cause you . . . to do them," what else is He saying but that, "I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh," which caused you not to do them, and, "I will give you a heart of flesh, which will cause you to do them"? And what else is meant here except that, "I will take away the obstinate heart which caused you not to do them and I will give you an obedient heart which will cause you to do them"? He who causes us to act is He to whom the Psalmist says: "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth,"[12] which is the same as to say: "Cause me to set a watch before my mouth." It was only after he had obtained this favor from God that he declared: "I have set a guard to my mouth."[13]

8 Prov. 8.35. Cf. A. Sage, " 'Preparatur voluntas a Domino,' " *Revue des études augustiniennes* 10 (1964) 1-20.
9 Ps. 26.33.
10 Phil. 2.13.
11 Ezech. 36.27.
12 Ps. 140.3.
13 Ps. 38.2.

Chapter 17

33. Whoever, therefore, has the will to keep God's commandment, but lacks the power, already possesses a good will, but one that is still small and feeble. But once he comes to have a great and robust will, he will have this power. When the martyrs, for example, carried out those great commandments, they did so with a great will, namely, with that great love whereof the Lord Himself says: "Greater love than this no one has, that one lay down his life for his friends."[1] This is also the reason why the Apostle says: "For he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. For 'Thou shalt not commit adultery; Thou shalt not kill; Thou shalt not steal; Thou shalt not covet'; and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in the saying, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.' Love does no evil to a neighbor. Love therefore is the fulfillment of the Law."[2]

When the Apostle Peter thrice denied the Lord out of fear, he did not yet have this love, for, as John the Evangelist says in his Epistle: "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear."[3] Yet, though it was not great or perfect, love was not wanting in Peter when he declared: "I will lay down my life for thee,"[4] inasmuch as he fancied he could do what he had the will to do. And who was it that had begun to impart to him this love, however small, but God who prepares our will and brings to perfection through His cooperation the work which His operation begins in us? For He who first works in us the power to will is the same who cooperates in bringing this work to perfection in those who will it. Accordingly, the Apostle says: "I am convinced of this, that he who has begun a good work in you will bring it to perfection

1 John 15.13.
2 Rom. 13.8-10.
3 1 John 4.18.
4 John 14.37.

until the day of Christ Jesus."[5] God, then, works in us, without our cooperation, the power to will, but once we begin to will, and do so in a way that brings us to act, then it is that He cooperates with us. But if He does not work in us the power to will or does not cooperate in our act of willing, we are powerless to perform good works of a salutary nature. With reference to His working in us the power to will, it is said: "For it is God who works also in you to will,"[6] whereas, concerning His cooperation in us, once we begin to will so that our volition brings us to act, the Apostle says: "Now we know that for those who love God all things work together unto good."[7] What does he mean by "all things," if not the terrible and cruel sufferings we now endure? To be sure, this yoke of Christ, so burdensome for our infirmity, is made light where there is love. For the Lord has said that His burden is light[8] for men such as Peter was at the time he suffered for Christ, not as he was when he denied Christ.

34. It is such a charity as this, namely, a will on fire with God's love, which is commended to us by the Apostle where he says: "Who shall separate us from the love of God? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or hunger, or nakedness, or danger, or the sword? Even as it is written: 'For thy sake we are put to death all the day long. We are regarded as sheep for the slaughter.' But in all things we overcome be-

5 Phil. 1.6.

6 Phil. 2.13.

7 Rom. 8.28. Here, as well as in the subsequent companion treatise *De correptione et gratia* (7.14), Augustine adopts the reading *cooperatur* instead of the Vulgate reading *cooperantur,* employed in his previous works. Taken in conjunction with the previous text from the Philippians, "For it is God who works *(operatur)* in you also to will," the reading *cooperatur* enables Augustine to draw the distinction between *gratia operans* and *gratia cooperans,* which corresponds with the distinction made above between "imperfect" and "perfect" love, as exemplified in the conduct of the apostle Peter. Theologians of the later Augustinian school will base their distinction of *gratia versatilis* (inefficacious grace) and *gratia efficax* (efficacious grace) on this passage of *Grace and Free Will.* The former, they contend, was sufficient for man in the state of innocence, whereas the latter is necessary for man after the Fall.

8 Cf. Matt. 11.30.

cause of him who has loved us. For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."[9] And in another passage: "And I point out to you a yet more excellent way. If I should speak with the tongues of men and angels, but do not have charity, I have become as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. And if I have prophecy and know all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith so as to remove mountains, yet do not have charity, I am nothing. And if I distribute all my goods to feed the poor, and if I deliver my body to be burned, yet do not have charity, it profits me nothing. Charity is patient, is kind; charity does not envy, is not pretentious, is not puffed up, is not ambitious, is not self-seeking, is not provoked; thinks no evil, does not rejoice over wickedness, but rejoices with truth; bears with all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Charity never fails."[10] And a little later in the same passage: "There abide faith, hope, and charity, these three: but the greatest of these is charity. Aim at charity."[11] Likewise, writing to the Galatians, he says: "For you have been called to liberty, brethren; only do not use liberty as an occasion for sensuality, but by charity serve one another. For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word: 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.' "[12] This is the very thing he says to the Romans: "For he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the Law."[13] And in a similar vein to the Colossians: "But about all these things have charity, which is the bond of perfection."[14] Writing to Timothy, he says: "Now the end of the commandment is charity," a kind of charity, as he goes on to add, which is

9 Rom. 8.35-39.
10 1 Cor. 12.31; 13.1-8.
11 1 Cor. 13.13-14.1.
12 5.13-14.
13 13.8.
14 3.14.

"from a pure heart, and a good conscience, and an unfeigned faith."[15] Moreover, when he tells the Corinthians: "Let all that you do be done in charity,"[16] he makes it clear enough that even corrections are to be administered with charity, though they are felt to be sharp and bitter by those who are undergoing correction. Accordingly, once he had given this direction in another passage: "Reprove the irregular, comfort the fainthearted, support the weak, be patient towards all men," he at once added: "See that no one renders evil for evil to any man."[17] Even in correcting the irregular, therefore, we are not rendering evil for evil, but rather good for evil. And what else but love can do all this?

35. And there is the Apostle Peter who says: "But above all things have a constant mutual charity among yourselves; for charity covers a multitude of sins."[18] And the Apostle James likewise says: "If, however, you fulfill the royal law, according to the Scriptures, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself,' you do well."[19] Similarly, the Apostle John declares: "He who loves his brother abides in the light";[20] and in another place: "Whoever is not just is not of God, nor is He just who does not love his brother. For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another."[21] And again: "And this is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another";[22] also: "And this commandment we have from him, that he who loves God should love his brother also."[23] And then a little later: "In this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and do his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his com-

15 1Tim. 1.5.
16 1 Cor. 16.14.
17 1 Thess. 5.14-15.
18 1 Peter 4.8.
19 James 2.8.
20 1 John 2.10.
21 1 John 3.10.
22 1 John 3.23.
23 1 John 4.21.

mandments, and his commandments are not burdensome."[24] And in his Second Epistle we find it written: ". . . not as writing to thee a new commandment, but that which we have had from the beginning, that we love one another."[25]

36. The Lord Jesus Himself also declares that the whole Law and the Prophets depend upon the two precepts to love God and our neighbor.[26] In the Gospel of Mark we find this written concerning these two precepts. "And one of the Scribes came forward who had heard them disputing together; and seeing that He had answered them well, he asked him which was the first commandment of all. But Jesus answered him, 'The first commandment of all is: "Hear O Israel! The Lord our God is one God; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind [and with all thy strength]." This is the first commandment. And the second is like to it: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."[27] There is no other commandment greater than these.' "[28] He likewise declares in the Gospel of John: "A new commandment I give you, that you love one another: that as I have loved you, you also love one another. By this will all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."[29]

Chapter 18

37. All these precepts concerning love, or charity, would have been given men to no purpose if they did not have free choice of the will; for such is their nature and importance that whatever a man supposes he is doing well is not done well at all if it is done without charity. Now these precepts

24 1 John 5.2-3.
25 2 John 5.
26 Cf. Matt. 22.40.
27 Deut. 6.4-5; Lev. 19.18.
28 Mark 12.28-31.
29 13.34-35.

are given in both the Old and New Law, though the grace promised in the Old Law comes only with the New Law. Without grace, the Law is the letter that killeth, whereas, with grace, it is the life-giving spirit. Whence comes this love of God and neighbor in man, if not from God Himself? For if it does not come from God, but from man, then it is the Pelagians who have prevailed; but if it comes from God, then we have prevailed over the Pelagians. Let the Apostle John, therefore, sit in judgment between us and issue the command: "Dearly beloved, love one another."[1] When the Pelagians begin to feel elated at these words of the Apostle and to ask why this command is given us at all unless we are able of ourselves to love one another, the same John proceeds to confound them by saying: "For love is from God."[2] Charity, therefore, is not of ourselves, but of God.

Why then has the command been given, "Let us love one another, for love is of God," except that this precept should prompt our free will to ask for God's gift? And this would certainly be of no avail at all unless the will at first received some measure of love enabling it to ask for more, so as to fulfill what was commanded. When it says, "Love one another" —that is the Law; when it says, "love is of God"—that is grace. Certainly, God's "Wisdom carries law and mercy upon her tongue."[3] Whence it is written in the Psalm: "For the lawgiver shall give a blessing."[4]

38. Let no one then deceive you, my brethren, for we could not love God unless He first loved us. The same John makes this very clear when he says: "Let us therefore love, because God first loved us."[5] Grace makes us lovers of the Law, whereas the same Law, without grace, makes of us only prevaricators. And the Lord teaches us the same thing where He says to His Apostles: "You have not chosen me but I have

1 1 John 4.7.
2 1 John 4.7.
3 Prov. 3.16 [LXX].
4 Ps. 83.8.
5 1 John 4.19.

chosen you."[6] For if we first loved Him so as to merit His love in return, then we first chose Him so as to merit our being chosen by Him. But He who is Truth Itself says otherwise and openly contradicts such human vanity by declaring: "You have not chosen me." Consequently, if it is not you who have chosen, then it is certainly not you who have loved; for how could they choose Him whom they did not love? "But it is I," He says, "who have chosen you." And how could they possibly fail to choose Him afterwards, or fail to prefer Him to all the goods of this world? It was because they were chosen that they chose Him; they were not chosen because they had chosen Him. There would be no merit in men's choosing Him unless the action of God's grace in choosing them had gone before. This is why in imparting his blessing to the Thessalonians the Apostle Paul declares: "And may the Lord make you to increase and abound in charity towards one another, and towards all men."[7] He who gave this blessing to love one another is the same who gave us the love to love one another. Again, because some of them were sure to possess already the good dispositions he wished to be theirs, he went on to say in another passage, directed to the same Thessalonians: "We are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren, as is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly and your charity each for the other increases."[8] This he said so that they might not be elated over this great blessing which they enjoyed from God, as if it were something they possessed of themselves. Seeing, therefore, that your faith grows exceedingly and your charity for each other increases, as the Apostle says, we ought to thank God in your regard, and not praise you as if you possessed all this of yourselves.

39. And writing to Timothy, he says: "For God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of

6 John 15.16.
7 1 Thess. 3.12.
8 2 Thess. 1.3.

prudence."[9] We are certainly not to understand from these words of the Apostle that the spirit of the fear of God is something that we have not received. It is unquestionably a great gift of God and one concerning which the Prophet Isaia says: "And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him: the spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the spirit of counsel and of fortitude, the spirit of knowledge and godliness, the spirit of the fear of the Lord."[10] The spirit of fear which we have received is not that which led Peter to deny Christ, but that fear whereof Christ Himself says: "Be afraid of him who has power to destroy both body and soul in hell. Yes, I say to you, be afraid of him."[11] Now He said this so that we might not deny Him by the kind of fear that had shaken Peter. It was because he wished to remove such fear from us that He had said earlier: "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have nothing more that they can do."[12] It is not the spirit of such fear as this that we have received, but the spirit of power and of love and of prudence. Referring to this kind of fear, the same Apostle declares to the Romans: "We exult in tribulations, knowing that tribulation works out endurance, and endurance tried virtue, and tried virtue hope. And hope does not disappoint, because the charity of God is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who is given to us."[13] It is not by ourselves, therefore, but by the Holy Spirit who is given to us, that this charity shown by the Apostle to be God's gift, is the reason why tribulation does not destroy patience but rather gives rise to it. Again, writing to the Ephesians, he says: "Peace to the brethren, and love with faith." Great blessings, indeed, but now let him tell us whence they come. "From God the

9 2 Tim. 1.7.
10 Isa. 11.23.
11 Luke 12.5.
12 Luke 12.4.
13 Rom. 5.3-5.

Father," he replies, "and the Lord Jesus Christ."[14] These great blessings then are none other than God's gifts to us.

Chapter 19

40. But it is not surprising that "the light shines in the darkness and the darkness grasps it not."[1] It is this Light that says to us in John's Epistle: "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us that we should be called and should be the sons of God,"[2] while the Darkness tells us in the Pelagian writings: "Love comes to us of ourselves." If these men had true love, that is, Christian love, they would also know whence they come to have it, as the Apostle knew when he said: "Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the spirit that is from God, that we may know the things that have been given us by God."[3] And John says: "God is love."[4] The Pelagians further maintain that they possess God and that this does not come from God but from themselves. And while they acknowledge that the knowledge of the Law comes to us from God, they would have it that charity comes from ourselves, being deaf to the words of the Apostle that "knowledge puffs up, but charity edifies."[5] What could be more inept, what could really be more absurd or more alien to the essential holiness of charity than to maintain that knowledge, which puffs up without charity, comes from God, while that which makes it impossible for knowledge to puff up, namely, charity, comes from ourselves? Again, when the Apostle speaks of "Christ's love which surpasses knowledge,"[6] what greater absurdity than to

14 Eph. 6.23.

1 John 1.5.
2 1 John 3.1.
3 1 Cor. 2.12.
4 1 John 4.16.
5 1 Cor. 8.1.
6 Eph. 3.19.

suppose that knowledge, which ought to be subject to charity, comes to us from God, while charity which surpasses knowledge, comes from ourselves? But true faith and sound teaching tell us that knowledge and love are both from God, since, as the Scripture says: "From his face came knowledge and understanding";[7] and, "love is of God."[8] We likewise read of the "spirit of knowledge and piety,"[9] and of the "spirit of power and of love and of prudence."[10] But charity is a greater gift than knowledge; for whenever knowledge is present in man, charity is necessary to keep him from being puffed up, whereas charity "does not envy, is not pretentious, is not puffed up."[11]

Chapter 20

41. I think I have argued at sufficient length against those who inveigh so violently against the grace of God. The will is not destroyed by grace, but is changed from a bad to a good will, and is aided by grace once it becomes good. I also believe that I have done so in such a way that it has been the Sacred Scriptures, rather than I, that have spoken to you by their very clear testimonies of the truth. If the Scripture is examined carefully, it will not merely show that God has power over the good wills of men which He has changed from being evil and which He directs toward the performance of good acts and life eternal once He has made them good. It will also reveal that those wills of men which remain creatures of this world are so subject to God's power that He can bend them wherever and whenever He pleases, whether by bestowing benefits upon some or by inflicting punishment upon others, according as He Himself ordains by His decrees, hidden of course from us, but perfectly just beyond all doubt.

7 Prov. 2.6.
8 1 John 4.7.
9 Isa. 11.2.
10 2 Tim. 1.7.
11 1 Cor. 13.4.

For we find that some sins are also a punishment for other sins, as instanced in those "vessels of wrath" which the Apostle speaks of as "ready for destruction";[1] or as in the hardening of Pharao's heart in order, as it is said, to manifest God's power in him;[2] and as in the flight of the Israelites from the face of the enemy out of the city of Hai because fear was instilled into their hearts so that they fled. And this was done to punish their sin, and to punish it as it deserved to be punished, which is why the Lord said to Josue, the son of Nun: "The children of Israel shall not be able to stand before his enemies."[3] What is the meaning of "shall not be able to stand"? Why did they not use their free will to stand rather than take flight because their wills were thrown into confusion by fear? Was it not for the simple reason that God, as Master of men's wills, can in His anger instill fear into the hearts of whomsoever He pleases? Was it not of their own free choice that the enemies of the Israelites fought against God's own people when they had Josue, son of Nun, as their leader? And yet the Scripture tells us that "it was by the will of the Lord that their hearts should be strengthened that they should fight against Israel . . . and should be destroyed."[4] Was it not of his own free will that the wicked man Semei, son of Gera, cursed King David? And yet what does David say, filled as he was with a true and deep and heavenly wisdom? What, I ask, does he say to the man who wanted to strike down his reviler? "What have I to do with you," he says, "ye sons of Sarvia? Let him alone and let him curse: for the Lord hath bid him curse David. And who is he that shall dare say, 'Why hath he done this?' "[5] Then, as if to give full

1 Rom. 9.22. The Vulgate reads "ready for destruction." In the examples which follow Augustine illustrates his point that "some sins are even a punishment for other sins." In a letter to Sixtus, which occasioned the present treatise, he states that the heart is hardened, not by God's imparting malice to it, but by not imparting His mercy to it (*Ep.* 194.3.14).
2 Cf. Exod. 9.16.
3 Jos. 7.12.
4 Jos. 11.20.
5 2 Kings 16.10.

approval to King David's judgment, the Sacred Scripture repeats the episode from a different starting point, saying: "And King David said to Abisai and to all his servants: Behold my son who came forth from my bowels seeketh my life: how much more now a son of Jemini? Let him alone that he may curse as the Lord hath bidden him. Perhaps the Lord may look upon my affliction, and the Lord may render me good for the cursing of this day."[6] How is it possible even for a wise man to understand how God could tell this man to curse David? Actually, He did not tell him this by way of a command, for then the man would have been praised for his obedience. Rather, God inclined his will, which was already perverted by its own wickedness, to a sin of this kind, in accordance with His own just and hidden judgment. It was in this sense that the Lord spoke to him. For if he had obeyed God's order, he would have deserved praise rather than blame, as we know he was punished afterwards because of this sin. Nor does the Scripture conceal the reason why God told him in this way to curse David, namely, why He caused his heart to fall into this sin or allowed it to do so. "Perhaps the Lord will look upon my affliction," he says, "and the Lord will render me good for the cursing of this day." Here you have a proof of how God uses even the hearts of wicked men to commend and help those who are good. It was thus that He made use of Judas in his betrayal of Christ and of the Jews who crucified Him. And, as a result of this, how great have been the blessings which He has bestowed upon the people who were to believe in Him? He even makes use of the devil himself, the worst of all, but does so in the best way possible to exercise and put to the test the faith and piety of good men; not for His own sake, since He knows everything before it happens, but for our benefit, since it was necessary that He should deal with us in this fashion.

6 2 Kings 16.11-12.

Was it not by Absalom's own will that he chose to follow advice that proved detrimental to him, though he only did so because the Lord had heard his father's prayer to this effect?[7] Accordingly, as the Scripture says: "And by the command of the Lord the good counsel of Achitophel was defeated, that the Lord might bring evil upon Absalom."[8] The counsel of Achitophel was called "good" because it served his purpose for the time, since it favored Absalom over his father whom he had risen up against in rebellion. And it might well have destroyed him if the Lord had not frustrated Achitophel's counsel by influencing the heart of Absalom to reject this counsel and to choose another which was not to his advantage.

Chapter 21

42. Who can help but tremble at the thought of these judgments of God whereby He accomplishes whatever He pleases even in the hearts of wicked men, while yet rendering to each according to his merits? Solomon's son, Roboam, rejected the salutary counsel of the elders, not to deal harshly with the people, and yielded to the words of men of his own age by replying with threats to those who should have been given a gentle reply. And how did this come about, except by his own will? But as a result of it, the ten tribes of Israel withdrew from him and set up for themselves another king, Jeroboam, that the will of God, who had been angered, might be accomplished, as He had also foretold that it would come to pass. For what does the Scripture say? "And the king condescended not to the people: for the Lord was turned away from him to make good his word, which he had spoken through Ahias, the Silonite, to Jeroboam the son of Nabat."[1]

7 Cf. 2 Kings 15.31.
8 2 Kings 17.14.

1 3 Kings 12.15.

All this was certainly done by man's will, but in such a way that the "turning way" came from the Lord.

Just read the Books of Paralipomenon and this is what you will find written in the Second Book: "And the Lord stirred up against Jarom the spirit of the Philistines and of the Arabians who border on the Ethiopians. And they came up to the land of Juda and wasted it, and they carried away all substance that was found in the king's house."[2] Here we have a clear indication of how God stirs up enemies to lay waste those countries which He judges to be deserving of such punishment. And yet, was it not of their own will that the Philistines and Arabs came to lay waste the country of Juda? Or did they so come of their own will that the Scripture lies where it tells us that the Lord stirred up their spirit to do so? On the contrary. Both statements are true because they did come of their own will and God did stir up their spirit. The same thing could also be expressed by saying that God both stirred up their spirit and that they came nevertheless of their own will. For the Almighty, who cannot possibly will anything unjust, is able to set in motion even the inclinations of their will in men's hearts in order to accomplish through these men whatever He wishes to achieve through their agency. What meaning can these words have which the man of God addressed to King Amasias: "Let not the army of Israel go out with thee, for the Lord is not with Israel and all the children of Ephraim. And if thou think to prevail over them, God will put thee to flight before thy enemies; for it belongeth to God both to help and to put to flight"?[3] How does the power of God help some in war by giving them confidence, and turn others to flight by instilling them with fear, except for this reason, that He who has made all things as He willed in heaven and on earth, also works in the hearts of men? We also read of what Joas, King of Israel, said when he dispatched a messenger to King Amasias, who had a mind

2 2 Par. 21.16-17.
3 2 Par. 25.7-8.

to go to war with him. Having mentioned certain things, he went on to say: "Sit at home. Why provokest thou evil that thou shouldst fall and Juda with thee?"[4] The Scripture then went on to add: "And Amasias would not hearken to him because it was the Lord's will that he should be delivered into the hands of enemies because they sought after the gods of Edom."[5] There you see how God, wishing to punish the sin of idolatry, influenced the heart of this man with whom he was indeed justly angry, that he would not heed salutary advice but, in his contempt for it, would engage in battle, there to perish together with his army. Speaking through His prophet Ezechiel, God said: "And when the prophet shall err and speak, I the Lord have deceived that prophet: and I will stretch forth my hand upon him and I will cut him off from the midst of my people Israel."[6] We read in the Book of Esther how this woman from the people of Israel became the wife of a foreign king, Assuerus, in the land of captivity. It is recorded in this Book that when Esther was faced with the necessity of intervening for her people, whom the king had ordered to be slain wherever they might be found in his kingdom, she prayed to the Lord. The urgency of the situation made her venture into the king's presence contrary to the king's orders and to her own accustomed way of acting. Observe now what the Scripture says: "He looked upon her with the violent indignation of a bull; the queen was frightened and her color changed through faintness; she leaned upon the head of her maid-companion who went before her. And God changed the King and turned his indignation into gentleness."[7] It is also written in the Proverbs of Solomon: "Even as the rush of water, so the heart of the king is in the hands of the Lord; whithersoever he will he shall turn it."[8] And in Psalm 104, concerning the Egyptians, we read what

4 4 Kings 14.10.
5 2 Par. 25.20.
6 Ezech. 14.9.
7 Esth. 15.10-11 [LXX].
8 Prov. 21.1.

God did to them: "He turned their hearts to hurt his people and to deal deceitfully with his servants."[9] Observe also what is written in the Epistles of the Apostles. We read in the Epistle of the Apostle Paul to the Romans: "Therefore God gave them up in the lustful desires of their hearts to uncleanness"; and a little later: "For this cause God has given them up to shameful lusts"; and a few verses later: "And as they have resolved against possessing the knowledge of God, God has given them up to a reprobate sense, so that they do what is not fitting."[10] And in the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians, he has this to say of certain men: "For they have not received the love of truth that they might be saved. Therefore God sends them a misleading influence that they may believe falsehood, that all may be judged who have not believed the truth, but have preferred wickedness."[11]

43. From these and other similar testimonies of the inspired Books, which cannot all be mentioned for want of time, I think it is quite clear that God works in men's hearts to incline their wills to whatsoever way He wills: either to good in accordance with His mercy, or to evil in accordance with their evil merits, and this, indeed, by His own judgments, sometimes manifest, sometimes hidden, but always just.[12] You must keep this conviction firm and unshaken in your heart that in God there is no injustice. Accordingly, when you read the truth of the Scriptures and find that men are led astray by God, or that their hearts are dulled and hardened by Him, have no doubt that it was their previous evil merits that made them suffer their just penalties. You will thus not clash with that proverb of Solomon: "The folly of man perverts his ways, while he blames God in his heart."[13]

But grace is not given according to men's merits; otherwise grace is no longer grace, seeing that it is called grace precisely

9 Ps. 104.25.
10 Rom. 1.24, 26, 28.
11 2 Thess. 2.10-11.
12 Cf. Rom. 9.14.
13 Prov. 19.3.

because it is freely given. Now if God is able, either through good or bad angels, or in some other way, to work in the hearts of even wicked men according to their merits—though He is not the cause of their wickedness, which they have either contracted through original sin or have increased through their own will—what wonder is it that He should work good in the hearts of His elect through the Holy Spirit, when He has already brought about a change in these same hearts from evil to good?

Chapter 22

44. But suppose men do imagine that there are merits of some kind which they think come first in order that they may be justified by God's grace, though they fail to see that by making such an assertion they are simply denying grace. But, as I said, let them imagine anything they want to with regard to adults. In the case of infants, at least, the Pelagians do not know what to answer, since there is nothing voluntary in their receiving grace which they can allege as a cause of any previous merit. Moreover, while they are being baptized and made recipients of God's sacraments, we see how they even cry and put up a struggle, which should be imputed to them as a grave sin of irreverence if they already enjoyed the use of free will. And though they put up a struggle, grace nevertheless remains in them, obviously without any previous good merits; otherwise grace would no longer be grace. There are times too when this grace is conferred upon the children of unbelievers as when, in God's hidden Providence, they fall somehow or other into the hands of devout persons. But there are other times when the children of believers fail to obtain such grace because there is some obstacle present which makes it impossible to come to their aid when they are in danger of death. Certainly, these things take place by the

hidden Providence of God "whose judgments are incomprehensible and whose ways are unsearchable."[1] Take a careful look at what the Apostle had said before which led him to say what he did. He was discussing the Jews and Gentiles when, writing to the Romans, to Gentiles, that is, he had said: "For as you at one time did not believe God, but now have obtained mercy by reason of their unbelief, so they too have not now believed by reason of the mercy shown you, that they too may obtain mercy. For God has shut up all in unbelief, that he may have mercy upon all."[2] And after he had reflected upon what he had said, filled, indeed, with wonderment over the real truth of his words, but astounded by their great depth, of how God had shut up all in unbelief to show them all mercy—as if doing evil that good might result—he exclaimed at once, saying: "O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God. How incomprehensible are his judgments and how unsearchable his ways."[3] But there are certain perverse men, thoughtless and censorious, who through their inability to understand what is meant by the incomprehensible judgments and unsearchable ways, have boastfully supposed that the Apostle was saying: "Let us do evil that good may come."[4] God forbid that the Apostle should ever say this! But this is what those who fail to understand the Apostle thought he meant when he said: "Now the Law intervened that the offense might abound. But where the offense has abounded, grace has abounded yet more."[5] Grace does of course result in this, that good works are now performed by those who before had done evil; it does not make them continue in doing evil in the belief that good will be given them in return. So they should not say: "Let us do evil that good may come," but rather: "We have done evil and good has come; let us now

1 Cf. Rom. 11.33.
2 Rom. 11.30-32.
3 Rom. 11.33.
4 Rom. 3.8.
5 Rom. 5.20.

do good so that we who have received good for evil in this world may receive good for good in the world to come." Thus is it written in the Psalm: "Mercy and judgment I will sing to thee."[6] Accordingly, the Son of Man did not first come into the world to judge the world, but came in order that the world might be saved through Him.[7] He first came out of mercy; He will come hereafter for judgment, to judge the living and the dead, though, even at the present time, there is no salvation without judgment, but it is a hidden judgment. This is why He says: "For judgment have I come into this world, that they who do not see may see, and they who see may become blind."[8]

Chapter 23

45. Accordingly, when you observe the case of infants who undoubtedly are all subject to the same condition of having contracted the hereditary sin from Adam, and you see that one is helped to receive baptism, but not another, so that he dies shackled in the very chains of this sin; or that one who was baptized and whose future wickedness was foreseen by God, is abandoned in this life, while another is snatched from this life after baptism "lest wickedness should alter his understanding"[1]—you must refer these things to God's hidden judgments. You must not ascribe them to injustice or to a want of wisdom on the part of God in whom there is found the very source of justice and wisdom. Rather, as I exhorted you from the beginning of this treatise,[2] you are to walk according to the light already received. And God will disclose to you this mystery also, if not in this life, at least in the next, for "there is nothing concealed that will not

6 100.1.
7 Cf. John 3.17.
8 John 9.39.

1 Wisd. 4.11.
2 Cf. 1.1.

be disclosed."[3] Consequently, when you hear the Lord say: "I the Lord have deceived that prophet,"[4] or the words of the Apostle: "He has mercy on whom he will, and whom he wills he hardens,"[5] you must believe that there were evil merits in that man whom God permits to go astray and to become hardened, while, for the man upon whom He has mercy, you must acknowledge with an unswerving faith that this is a case of the grace of God who is not rendering evil for evil, but good for evil.[6] And you must not deny free will to Pharao just because God says in a number of places: "I have hardened Pharao," or, "I will harden the heart of Pharao,"[7] for it does not thereby follow that it was not Pharao himself who hardened his own heart. Furthermore, we read that this happened to Pharao after the plague of flies had been removed from the Egyptians, as the Scripture testifies: "And Pharao's heart was hardened so that neither this time would he let the people go."[8] Thus it was that both God and Pharao caused this hardening of the heart: God, by His just judgments, Pharao, by his free will.

You may be sure then that your efforts will not be in vain if only you persevere unto the end by going ahead with your good resolve. But God, who does not presently deal with those whom He sets free according to their works, will then render to each one according to his works. Being just, He will indeed render evil for evil; being good, He will render good for evil; being both good and just, He will render good for good. This only He will not do, namely, render evil for good, seeing that He is not unjust. He will, therefore, render evil for evil, and punishment for unrighteousness. He will also render good for evil, grace for unrighteousness, good for good, and grace for grace.

3 Matt. 10.26.
4 Ezech. 14.9.
5 Rom. 9.18.
6 Cf. 1 Peter 3.9.
7 Exod. 4.21; 7.3; 9.12; 10.20, 27; 14.4.
8 Cf. Matt. 16.27.

Chapter 24

46. Go over this treatise carefully in your mind. If you understand it, give thanks to God; where you fail to understand it, pray for understanding which God will give you. Recall the words of Scripture: "If anyone of us is wanting in wisdom, let him ask it of God, who gives abundantly to all men, and does not reproach; and it will be given to him."[1] As the Apostle himself expresses it, this is the wisdom "that descends from above."[2] But you must ward off from you, and pray that that kind of wisdom be not found in you which the Apostle abominated where he said: "But if you have bitter jealousy and contention in your hearts . . . this is not the wisdom that descends from above. It is earthly, sensuous, devilish. For where there is envy and contentiousness, there is instability and every wicked deed. But the wisdom that is from above is first of all chaste, then peaceable, moderate, docile . . . full of mercy and good fruits, without judging, without dissimulation."[3] What blessing, then, will that man not possess who has asked for and received this wisdom from the Lord? And this will give you an understanding of what grace is; for if this wisdom were from ourselves, it would not be from above and we would not have to ask for it from the same God who created us.

Pray for us also, brethren, that "we may live temperately and justly and piously in this world, looking for the blessed hope and manifestation of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ,"[4] to whom belong honor and glory and kingdom, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, forever and ever. Amen.

1 James 1.5.
2 James 3.17.
3 James 3.14-17.
4 Titus 2.12-13.